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ADDRESS
TO THE
TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS
OF THE
WINCHESTER SUNDAY SCHOOLS,
ON THE
FOURTH OF JULY, 1837.

BY NICHOLAS MURRAY, Esq.,
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL.

WINCHESTER :
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CELEBRATION OF THE FOURTH OF JULY
BY THE
SUNDAY SCHOOLS OF WINCHESTER.

Agreeably to previous arrangement, the three schools attached to the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, met at an early hour in their respective houses of worship, where a short time was spent in preparation for the general procession. This consisted in the distribution of Hymns which had been printed for the occasion and wrapped in paper of different colors to be carried in the hand, and in appending to the scholars their various badges of white, pink, and blue ribband, impressed with a neat and appropriate device. Never can we forget the glow of pleasure radiant in the countenances of the children on beholding, for the first time, these marks of distinction on their shoulders. Never did the hero's heart beat with a more tumultuous throb, when he beheld himself arrayed in the trappings of his profession, and ready to go forth to battle. The novelty of the proceeding and the pleasantness of the day brought together a crowd of children exceeding five hundred and fifty—all with smiling faces and clean garments, and all eager to testify their regard for their teachers by observing the strictest propriety of conduct.

After the necessary preparations had been made, the Presbyterian and Methodist schools proceeded to the Episcopal church, where, being joined by the Episcopal school, they formed in procession and proceeded to the Methodist church, with the Superintendents of the schools in front, the Clergy and Speakers in the rear, and the other officers of the schools acting as Marshals. After reaching the Methodist church, the exercises were commenced with a solemn and appropriate prayer by the Rev. JOSEPH BAKER, of the Baptist church, after which a Hymn was sung, principally by the children, when Mr. NICHOLAS MURRAY, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Sunday School, rose and delivered the following

ADDRESS :

CHILDREN : It is now just sixty-one years since the Fourth of July began to be a great day, and to be much talked of among the people. If any of us had been living sixty-two years ago we would not have heard a word more about the 4th of July then, than about any other day. But ever since the year 1776, whenever the Fourth of July has come, the people have been roused up in the morning by the firing of cannon, and called out by the music of the drum and fife, and have been

delighted to see the soldiers parading in their uniforms, and to listen to orations on independence and the revolution. Sometimes too, of late, children, especially those that belong to Sunday Schools, have been pleased to be collected together, to sing hymns, and to hear what may be said to them about this great day. Now, can any of you tell me why it is that there is always so great a stir made on the Fourth of July; and why we always see so much eating and drinking on this day more than on any other? Some of you can, I expect, but a great many of you, I am afraid, cannot. Well, if you will listen to me a few minutes, I will tell you the whole story. In times past there lived in England a certain king, whose name was James, of the house of Stuart, who dealt very sorely with a part of his people. Now, in the reign of King James there rose up certain ones of those whom the king did oppress, saying: How long shall the king deal hardly with his people; and how long shall we suffer this evil at his hand, seeing that we are without substance, and that the king's anger is kindled when we call upon the God of our fathers according to our own pleasure? Why do we not rather beseech the king to let us go to the country beyond the great sea, towards the going down of the sun, and possess the land, that it may be for a possession to us and our children forever? And the saying pleased many, and they besought the king to let them go, and the king hearkened unto their supplication and suffered them to depart. So they crossed over the great sea in ships, and came to the wilderness, which is called America, and they built for themselves there houses of wood and temples of brick and stone, and praised God in the wilderness. And they fought many battles with the inhabitants of that land—being very many, like so many grasshoppers for multitude; and they drove out the Indian before them with great slaughter, for the God of hosts was with them, and delivered their enemies into their hand. And when they were not afflicted by reason of war, they tilled the ground, and were made rich by the increase of the field. And they built cities by the sea shore, which were filled with craftsmen and merchantmen; and they carried off the fruits of the earth to England and brought back merchandise in ships. And to whatsoever they

put their hand, the Lord greatly prospered, insomuch that they became a great nation, and prevailed over all the land. And they were a happy people, and their God was the Lord; and they sat every one under his vine and fig tree, and there was none to make them afraid. Now all they that fled from England and came to America, and all that were raised up in the wilderness, were called by one name—the American Colonies. Howbeit they were still subject unto England and did the king's commandments, and they greatly loved the people of England, and were greatly loved of them. And it came to pass, in process of time, after many kings had reigned over England, that there arose a certain king whose name was George, of the house of Hanover, being the third of that name that had ruled in England. And the heart of King George was set in him against his children in America, to do them evil. And the counsellor that stood next to the king was one North, whose ways were not right in the sight of the people; and he stood before the king and advised him, saying: If it please the king, now let there go forth a decree that the American Colonies be taxed, and that the money be brought into the king's treasury. And when George the king saw it would enrich his treasury he hearkened unto the counsel of North; and so he made a decree that the American Colonies should pay tribute. And the decree that the king had made went abroad into all the land, and was told among all people. And when it was heard in America what a decree the king had made, the people were very wroth, and said one to another: Do we not love George the king? And have we not done all his commandments, that were righteous and good? And now that the king has purposed unrighteousness in his heart, and has hearkened to the counsel of his wicked servant to tax his children in America, shall we not say to the king, We will not suffer that wicked thing which the king has purposed against us, neither will we give of our substance to make rich the royal treasury? So they rose up as one man, and appointed chief men and mighty men of valor to go up to Philadelphia—a great city on the sea shore—and to send a writing to the king, that he would reverse the decree which he had decreed against them to make them pay tribute. And the chief men and mighty men of valor

met together in Philadelphia, and did according to the word of the people, and sent letters to the king. But the king hearkened not to their supplication, but sent over great armies to subdue the American Colonies, and to compel them to pay tax. And when the people in America saw the armies that the king of England had sent over against them to subdue them, their anger burned within them; and they straightway made war upon the royal armies and gave them battle, whereby many were killed and made captives. Now, while there was war between the captains of the king's host, and the captains of the armies that went out to meet them, the Lord put it into the hearts of the chief men and men of wisdom and might, that were met together in the great Congress at Philadelphia, to make a declaration. And on the 7th month and the fourth day of the month, July, they made a declaration, which is called the Declaration of Independence; whereby they refused to be any longer subject to the king of England, and published throughout the whole world that they were free and independent.— And when the declaration, which the chief men had made, was told among the people, they greatly rejoiced, and cried with one voice: It is well done. And they made the fourth day of the month, July, a day of feasting and gladness, and said: Let this now be a great day among us, and our children after us; and let it be remembered throughout every generation, that it may not fail, but be kept by every family and by every State, and every city, according to the appointed time every year. So the people of America had no king, but appointed over them a President, and made laws and statutes for themselves. And they lived happy, and were greatly prospered; insomuch that all the nations throughout the whole world, when they looked upon the people of America, were moved with envy, because of their prosperity and happiness. And it came to pass after many days that the children of the Sunday Schools in Winchester were gathered together in the house of the Lord on this day which their fathers had set apart to be kept; and these things were told unto them by Nicholas, the scribe. And they all rejoiced at what the Lord had done for them and their fathers in bringing them out from under the yoke of England, out of a state of bondage.

Now, children, let me tell you another story. About 100 years ago there lived in Westmoreland county, Virginia, a very worthy old gentleman, who had a family of several children, and among the rest a little boy, whose name was George. Now George, when he was quite young, showed a very amiable disposition, and was particularly remarkable for his love of truth; so much so indeed, that, unlike most little boys of his age, he never told a lie to conceal a fault or to avoid a whipping. But whenever he did any thing wrong through thoughtlessness, if inquiry was made about the author of the offence, he always came forward manfully and confessed it; and his father, so far from beating him for it, as a great many parents do in such cases, only loved him the more. Nor had George that stingy and selfish turn of mind, which some children show even when they are very young, and which makes them hoard up for themselves all the little presents they receive. When he was presented with such things as fruit or cakes, he always gave a liberal share to his brothers and playmates; and in consequence of his love of truth and his noble generosity he soon gained the love and confidence of all the children that knew him. Afterwards, when he became large enough to go to school, his father gave him in charge to an old gentleman by the name of Hobbey, who treated him very kindly, and taught him to spell and read. At school George was distinguished by the same regard for truth and spirit of liberality that had marked his character at home. Nor was this all. He never encouraged his schoolmates to fall out and fight and tear each other's eyes; but whenever a quarrel arose among them, he always tried to stop it, by telling them how low and beastly a thing it was for little companions, who ought to be like brethren, to beat and bruise one another. It was not long before this truth-telling, free-hearted, and peace-making little boy became a universal favorite among his schoolmates. So great indeed was the confidence they had in him, that if a dispute arose among them about any thing in their play, they always referred the matter to George, and to whatever he would say they all agreed, and then went away satisfied. Such noble conduct in a boy so young made his father love him very tenderly, and feel very anxious that he should preserve the good character he had thus

early acquired. To enable him to do this he thought it best to instruct him in the knowledge of the Lord, who preserves from temptation those that trust in him. So, it is said, on a fine morning in spring, he took him out into a beautiful garden he had just behind the house, and when they were there alone, the old gentleman told him he had a great secret to tell him. What is it, pa? cried George. Why, said he, I am going to introduce you to your true father. What? aint you my true father, pa? asked George in astonishment; for he greatly loved his father, and could not bear to hear that he had any other. A poor, good-for-nothing father indeed am I, George. If you had no better father than I am, my little son would never have had those pretty little eyes to look at the clear, blue sky, and the pleasant, green fields with; nor a little pug-nose to smell the sweet flowers with; nor—that's enough—pa! I know who you mean. You mean God Almighty,—dont you? Yes, my son, I do. He it is, that has given you all these good and pleasant things—and that has done far more for you than I have done; and he it is whom you ought to look upon as your true father, and whom you ought to love more than you do me or any one else. George understood the truth of what his father told him, and it is supposed that he never afterwards forgot the love of God which his father here taught him. About 14 years after this the cry of war was heard in the land; and the wild woods west of the Alleghany mountains resounded with the yell of savages, bent upon slaughter. The Indians, joined with the French, were killing and scalping the helpless families that lived in those new and distant settlements. An army of British soldiers and three companies from Virginia, with a proud British general at their head, marched out to meet them. (I think they marched through this town on their way.) They advanced as far as a fort in Pennsylvania, where now there is a large city; and as they were going through a narrow pass, they were fired upon by the Indians and French from behind trees and rocks. Hundreds fell dead on the spot; hundreds more were wounded. The British general and his officers were left among the dead or the dying, and all was confusion and dismay. In the midst of all this confusion and slaughter there appeared a tall young man, dressed like a col-

on, riding from place to place encouraging his men, and exhorting them not to give way. Every man was cut down from around him. A hundred rifles were levelled at him—one horse and then another and another were shot from under him—bullet after bullet pierced his garments, or whistled through his hair, but not one entered his body or did him harm; for an unseen Being protected him amid the battle's rage and brought him off in safety. And that unseen Being was the same that his father had introduced to him in the garden as his true father; for this brave colonel, children, was the little George. Many years after this, when the Revolutionary war was nearly at a close, and when the American army was encamped at a place called Valley Forge, an old Quaker gentleman chanced one morning to be passing along near the camp, and in the woods a little way off he heard the voice of a man, low at first, but becoming louder, till the old man was convinced that, whoever it was, he must be in earnest. So he concluded to draw a little nigher and see what it was the man was so deeply engaged about; but what was his surprise to see an officer, dressed in his regimentals, lifting up his heart and his voice in devout prayer? And how much greater was his surprise still when he discovered that it was the commander-in-chief of the American armies, who had retired to that lonely spot to ask the protection and guidance of his true father? For this again, children, was the same little George, who had now become an old man, and had been appointed commander of the American armies, and had led them forth to battle and to victory. After the war of the revolution was over, and peace was restored, a traveller chanced to put up one night in a town called Trenton, where a battle had been fought a few years before and decided in favor of the Americans. And in the morning when he got up he found the people all in a stir, the drums beating, and the bells ringing, the little boys leaping for joy, and the little girls and young ladies dressed in white and gathering flowers as though they were preparing for some great thing. After a while he saw them all gather around a bridge that was made over a little creek which ran through the town, and when they had collected around it, they ranged themselves on both sides of the road, as if waiting for some one to come along.

Presently a carriage came driving up, slowly it moved over the bridge, and just as it was quitting it, the young ladies and little girls commenced a most beautiful song, and when they came to these lines

“Strew, ye fair, his way with flowers,
Strew your hero's way with flowers,”

they cast the flowers they held in their hands and baskets, in the way before the carriage. Just then, an aged gentleman, who sat in the carriage, was seen to wipe away a tear from his eye, and then drive slowly on. I reckon now I need not tell you that that aged gentleman was George, who had now been made President of the United States, and who was then going on to New York to enter upon his office. About eleven years after this he died in a good old age, and was gathered to his fathers, having made his people happy in his life, and left them his benediction in the hour of death. After he was dead, the people mourned for him 30 days as for a father, and even to this day he is called the Father of his Country. I suppose, children, that you have all guessed long ago, that this same George was no other than George Washington, the greatest and the best man that the country ever saw. I have told you these anecdotes about General Washington, because I want you to remember the goodness of the Lord in raising up such a man to fight the battles of Independence—and to set us an example of virtue; and because I do not want you to forget that when he was a little boy, he loved the truth,—was not stingy,—hated quarrelling,—never swore,—obeyed his parents,—practised virtue,—and adored the Almighty. Now, that you may be like him in all these respects, is the very reason for which we instruct you in Sunday Schools. Will you therefore listen to me a few moments, while I endeavor to persuade these good friends, who have come here to-day to witness your celebration, to behold you in this good work.

Fellow-citizens: You see before you an assemblage of youth, collected from all parts of the town, and representing every diversity of condition; but all possessing a common character, and all aiming at a common end. They have been assem-

bled on this anniversary of our National Independence, not because it is desired to perpetuate in them a love of the martial prowess which shed lustre on American arms in the great struggle for American freedom; but because, as pupils, taught to acknowledge the God of providence, it was thought fit that they should unite in a song of praise to Him; who, in that struggle, nerved the patriot's arm, and brought relief to a suffering country.

They desire, also, that this occasion should be embraced to present and enforce the claims, which, in their appropriate sphere, they have upon your favorable regard. Their pretensions, it is true, are humble. They only claim to be scholars of a Sunday School, and in this capacity they ask to be contemplated. They, as you perceive, are in a course of training, but not to arms, nor like the Spartan youth, to expert theft. They are not trained to be dazzled by the pomp of military parade, nor to be captivated with the glory of military achievements. Nor are they taught to admire the character of the warrior, who traverses the land in the career of devastation and blood, and whose course may be tracked by the desolations he has made. The only hero that is allowed to challenge their admiration, is the hero that died upon the cross to redeem a ruined world. The books, which are put in their hands, are not those which cater for a depraved appetite, or foster guilty passions. The books, which they use, are the oracles of eternal truth, impressed by the living teacher upon the heart, in all the purity of their precept,—the sublimity of their doctrines, and the inspiration of their hopes. In a word, their training is a moral training. Its subjects are immortal spirits—its system, the revelation of God—its end, everlasting life.

They have been brought, with their own consent, under this training,—not to instil into their minds the dogmas of creeds, nor to warm their hearts with the zeal of sectaries; but to give them the advantage of a system of education, which, under the guidance of divine truth, proposes to qualify them to fulfil all the relations of social and domestic life—to give scope to the moral and religious tendencies of their nature—to raise them above the dominion of debasing desires, and malignant

passions—to exalt and purify their affections—to impose upon their unhallowed propensities the restraints of an enlightened conscience,—and to stamp upon their hearts the impress of that religion which teaches them to regard mankind as their brethren, the Lord of the universe as the object of their veneration, and the benignity of Heaven as their highest felicity. This is the system with which these children are connected, and these the advantages which it holds out to those who voluntarily put themselves within the range of its influences,—a system, surely, however low it may rank in the estimation of men, dignified in its nature, and immensely important in its results.

I know that it is quite common to observe, that attention to Sunday Schools is a little business; but is not the observation made without due reflection? Let us consider for a moment. The system has two aspects, in which its importance may be seen. First, its tendency to supply the church with enlightened members, and the ministry with devoted functionaries. It will be perceived at once that the nature of this address excludes the particularity of detail. I shall, therefore, content myself with observing, that Sunday Schools have now been in operation in this country for 47 years—the first being established in Philadelphia in the year 1790, of which the late lamented Bishop White was at the head; that during this time an opportunity has been afforded of testing their tendency by the fairest experiments; that their manifest advantages have gained them admission into every State, and almost every territory in the Union, until now the American Sunday School Union numbers among its auxiliaries, associations in every section, from Maine to Wisconsin, and from Canada to Texas; and that wherever they have been established, their existence has been a source of great increase to the church both in the number of intelligent members and zealous ministers. Take a single item from the last annual report. The number of Sunday School teachers that have made a profession of religion within the last year, as nearly as can be ascertained, is 5,500. Number of scholars that have been added to the church in the same time, about 13,000. And, considering that the period is but a single year, and that the whole number of teachers is not more

than 160,000, the majority of whom are already professors of religion, and that the whole number of scholars does not exceed 1,000,000, the great mass of whom are as yet children, too young to make a profession, this statement exhibits a proportion of conversions that cannot be found in any other class of a like description and age. Let one fact illustrate their effect in filling up the ministry. From one school in this Valley there have proceeded 14 ministers of the gospel; and this fact was mentioned in this very house but a short time since by a gentleman, who also stated that he himself was one of that number, that another of them was now Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond, and two or three others are now Missionaries in foreign lands. Nor are you to suppose that this is a rare, isolated instance. Cases, equally decisive in their character, are of by no means unfrequent occurrence.— And it is in view of such facts as these, that all good men now regard Sunday Schools, as the means that are to elevate the standard of christian character—to bless our country with a pious laity, and our church with an efficient ministry. Nor is it difficult to perceive how they are to accomplish these results. It is by the religious education which they supply—an education, which, to say the least of it, is the very best the country affords. Consider how small a proportion of parents make any pretensions to govern themselves or their children by the principles of the christian religion; and of those that do, how few there are who do not wholly neglect the religious training of their children, or who, if they attempt it at all, do not do it in a manner wholly incompatible with the best interests of the child. It is but too common for christian parents, who labor to comply with the Scriptural pretext, to train up their children in the way they should go, to be sadly disappointed in the fulfilment of the promise, that when they are old they will not depart from it. The truth is, they err in the principle on which they proceed. They, in too many cases, make the religion of their children a religion of bigotry, or of needless austerity; inculcating practices and imposing tasks at which their nature revolts. Or, appealing to the slavish principle of fear, they clothe the Deity himself in a garb of vengeance, or paint him as an arbitrary tyrant, uttering the voice of terror, and pursuing

with unrelenting rigor the transgressors of his law. It is thus that religion becomes associated in the mind of the child with every thing that is terrific in dread or dismal in gloom. From such a religion as this children turn with horror and disgust, and, rejoicing to be freed from the parental control that imposed it, they no sooner regain their natural liberty of action, than they impetuously plunge into the depths of dissipation and folly. But the Sunday School system, deriving light from the accumulated wisdom of experience, borrowing plans sanctioned by the most enlightened of the age, furnishing books of the best moral tendency, and combining in itself the happiest associations, arrays religion in a robe, that at once cheers, captivates, and invites. It takes the child, while its heart is yet unpolluted by the taint of prejudice, and its mind yet pliable to impressions of the tenderest kind, and alluring it into admiration of the divine beneficence, habituates it to regard the sovereign of the universe as the Saviour of sinners. Now, let it be granted, as it cannot be denied, that Sunday Schools furnish the best, and, in many cases, the only system of religious education to be found in the country; and their importance will assume another aspect upon which I may be allowed with more propriety to descant upon the present occasion.

As an American freeman, interested in the welfare of my country, and throwing forward an anxious glance into the future, I ask: What is to preserve the independence which this day commemorates? Is it the wisdom of our statesmen?—Alas! the past tells a tale that forbids the hope. Is it the accumulation of armies? Alas! the day that witnesses the array will toll the knell of departed liberty. What are the situation and prospect of our country at the present time? The tide of population has been rolling back for years, with unebbing flow, from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains. State has been added to State. Interest has arisen to clash with interest. Power has been grasping after power: till now the Republic is in danger of falling, like the empire of Rome, beneath the weight of its own accumulated greatness. Europe is pouring in upon us its hordes of paupers and victims of depravity, each bringing with him his own peculiar notions of religion and government, and each adding to the already

swollen mass of heterogeneous population. The power of the mob is swaying an iron sceptre; and misrule stalks abroad in defiance of the arm of civil authority. What then is to impart stability to this greatness, to neutralize these incongruous elements, and to give supremacy to the laws? The light of science? That is one step; but alone it comes short of the object; and the little provision that is made even for this, may be learned from the fact that there are now, in the United States, more than two millions of persons who are destitute of the knowledge of reading, and without the means of acquiring it. But establish among them schools. Give them all the secular knowledge the world can bestow. Make them all Aristotles, if you please, and what have you accomplished? What have you done, but put within their reach an engine of power; by which, if they choose in a moment of fanatical excitement to wield it for purposes of evil, at a blow they may crush the Union, unhinge society, and convulse the nation with a violence more tremendous than the earthquake's shock or the volcano's fires? Give us ignorance rather than intelligence without a more potent energy to control it. Ignorance, however stupendous the amount of power it may have brought within its grasp, is not adequate to half the mischief. It may be, like Virgil's fabled, huge, horrid, eyeless monster, with the disposition and all the energies to scatter death, but without the light to guide to objects of vengeance, or to direct in its career of ruin. But to the light of science add the blessing of a religious education and the thing is done: an education which inculcates obedience to civil rules as a sacred duty—an education which in its natural tendency harmonizes the discordant passions of the human heart—an education whose hallowed principles claim no alliance with the spirit of mobs or of lawless violence; and whose voice proclaims it better to seek the approbation of God, than to court the applause of a giddy multitude, or the smiles of a flaming demagogue. It is religious education, therefore, that affords the only sure foundation of rational, permanent liberty. Withhold this: and you give us the anarchy of France in the day it was thought she had buried religion forever. Withhold this: and you inflict upon us the factions of the South American States, who, tho' brave and independent, are too depraved to enjoy the freedom their valor has won. Withhold this: and before another generation shall have passed, the stars of the American Union will have sunk—ingloriously sunk—in everlasting night.

Is it then a little business to give our attention to a system which promises such results as those I have described? A little business, to drag thousands of children from the haunts of vice, and the depths of ignorance, and to make them virtuous



and wise! A little business, to train up a company of youth, who may fill the ministry of reconciliation, and adorn the church of the living God! A little business to restore millions of human beings to the image of their Maker; and to prepare them for the sublime enjoyments, and the incomparable splendors of an interminable career! A little business to arrest the progress of violence and disorder, to give to independence its only permanent basis, and to throw around our institutions a bulwark more impregnable than the ramparts of cities or the fastnesses of nature! A little business! Let it not be told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon. Do not these considerations justify the hope that the Sunday School system is destined to accomplish a great work? It is true we may be disappointed. Religion itself may be doomed, even in this favored land, to prostration, and our country may sink, and sink, and sink forever. But so far as Sunday Schools furnish the education which tends to the perpetuity of both, I trust their claim to regard will not be without a response in the bosom of every lover of his God and of his country.

Our reliance is on the extended philanthropy, and the christian benevolence of the present age. Shall our dependence fail us? Christian benevolence! what can it not accomplish? What has it not already achieved? Taking the world for the ample theatre of its action, and the whole family of man for the objects of its charity, it has embraced in the range of its glorious munificence, the wretched of every grade. Its messengers of mercy have penetrated the heart of countries buried for ages in the darkness and depravity of Pagan superstition. Its missionaries, fired with celestial ardor, have neither blenched from the asperities of the North nor refused to tread the burning sands of the South. Its trophies have been gathered from every clime—its banner floats in triumph on the mountains of the East, and its song of victory and rejoicing has been heard in the islands of the Ocean. Christian benevolence! heaven-descended principle! thy fountain is in the skies—thy waters irrigate the world.

After the singing of another Hymn, the meeting was addressed by the Rev. Mr. COLLINS, of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The benediction was then pronounced by the Rev. J. J. ROYAL, and the assemblage dispersed in good order, all, no doubt, highly delighted with the occasion which had brought them together.